World Trade Situation and Policy Updates

USDA/APHIS Bans Imports of Spanish Clementines

Effective immediately, APHIS has banned imports of clementines from Spain due to live detections of Mediterranean fruit fly larvae. Live detections were found and confirmed in food stores in three U.S. states (NC, MD, LA). An unconfirmed detection was allegedly reported in Iowa, as well. This ban applies to all shipments that have not left the port and shipments that are in transit from Spain. The increased presence of Mediterranean fruit fly is being attributed to warm weather during the growing season. The APHIS ban comes at the height of the Spanish clementine shipping season. During October-December 2000/01, U.S. imports of clementines/mandarins totaled 64,389 tons, representing 82 percent of the total for whole year. December alone accounted for 41 percent of the total. The total for 2000/01 was 78,502 tons, valued at $100.2 million.

Spanish Citrus Producers Likely to Seek Legal Action

In response to the USDA decision to halt imports of clementines from Spain, the Spanish producers' association "Intercitrus" has stated it plans to seek legal action. The United States halted imports from Spain when live Mediterranean fruit fly larvae were detected in the imported clementines in several U.S. states. Intercitrus issued a statement noting that "Spanish exporters are complying with all aspects of the clementine export protocol to the United States, which includes quarantines to eliminate live Mediterranean fruit flies." Industry officials estimate that Spanish farmers and exporters could lose as much as US$54 million as a result of the ban. The United States exported $591 million of agricultural products to Spain in fiscal year 2001.

Colombia Grants Import Approval to Apples from Michigan

The Colombian Plant Health Office (ICA) has approved imports of apples originating from the state of Michigan. For this season only, ICA has waived the mandatory site visit, which is required under the terms of the U.S./Colombia work plan for exporting apples. Instead, ICA decided to apply the surveillance and control programs that are in place in other U.S. approved states for one year in Michigan, with a site visits to follow before the next export season, if Michigan's apple shipments to Colombia are to continue. The approval of shipments from Michigan will likely expand overall U.S. apple sales to the Colombian market. In marketing year 2000/01 (July-June) total U.S. apple exports to Colombia totaled 4,420 tons, valued at nearly $2 million.

Mexico Reauthorizes Ports of Entry for U.S. Apples

On December 14, 2001, Mexico's Secretariat of Treasury announced the reestablishment of the ports of Mexicali, Nuevo Laredo, and Veracruz as official ports of entry for apples from the United States. Mexico also added the port of Tuxpan as an official border crossing. This action increases the total number of ports authorized to import U.S. apples from five to nine, including Ciudad Juarez, Nogales, Ciudad Reynosa, Manzanillo, and Tijuana, which were authorized in June 2001. On June 29, 2001, Mexico eliminated access for U.S. apples through the ports of Mexicali, Nuevo Laredo, and Veracruz. The announcement was part of Mexico's efforts to control alleged unfair practices involving apples coming from the United States. Mexico is the top destination for U.S. apples, with sales in marketing year 2000/2001 (July-June) totaling nearly 225,000 tons, valued at $125 million.

New Wine Agreement Reached Between United States and other "New World" Producers

A Mutual Acceptance Agreement (MAA) on Oenological Practices has been signed by the United States, Canada, Australia, Chile, and New Zealand. The MMA promotes greater international wine commerce and eases trade barriers for U.S. wine. Under the agreement, each country will permit the importation of wines from every other signatory country as long as these wines are made in accordance with the producing country's domestic laws, regulations and requirements on oenological (winemaking) practices. The United States already allows wine imports if they meet another country's standards, but this agreement ensures that participating trade partners give U.S. wines the same conditions. The agreement will also establish transparency requirements and consultation and dispute-resolution mechanisms. The agreement does not limit signatories' rights or obligations under the World Trade Organization Agreements. Future work includes negotiation of a wine labeling agreement. Argentina and South Africa participated in the negotiation of the agreement and have the option to sign it prior to March 31, 2002. U.S. wine exports equaled $523 million in 2000. Of this total, shipments to Canada were $93 million; Australia, $343,000; New Zealand, $172,000; and Chile, $100,000.